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## **A Research Paper on Couple Conflict**

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## Introduction

Conflict is a normal part of any relationship. After all, two people can't be expected to agree on everything, all the time. Sometime conflict can happen with a smile. Learning how to deal with conflict rather than avoiding it, is crucial. When conflict is mismanaged, it can cause great harm to a relationship, but when handled in a respectful, positive way, conflict provides an opportunity to strengthen the bond between two people, couple. Therefore this paper will help us to learn some of the causes of conflicts and will draw us a conclusion on how one can resolve and care for the conflicts.

### 1. Meaning of Conflict

According to *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* conflict means "disagreement, emotional tension resulting from incompatible inners or drives; opposition of persons or forces that give rise to the dramatic action in a drama or fiction".<sup>1</sup> Conflict is the existence of divergent aims or goals within the person or group. It is normally expected that conflict be resolve or reduced, especially for healthy functioning. The nature of the conflict is determined by the positive or negative aspects of the goal object.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Types of Couple's Conflict

How does conflict arises? What are the areas that spouse argues? Conflict is a normal part for couples. A couple's conflict arises under their different perceptions of the transgression of limits.<sup>3</sup> Conflict arises from both large and small. Differing needs for feeling comfortable and safe create some of the most severe challenges in our personal and professional relationships. Here are some of the problems that cause conflict between husbands and wives.<sup>4</sup>

#### i. Financial Matter

The financial problem is other serious crisis in couple, which affecting spiritual relationship with God. Money handling is one of the most common sources of conflicts between couples. It is a

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<sup>1</sup> Philip B. Gove, (Edit). *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, Massachusetts: G&C. Merriam Co. Publishers, 1965), 175.

<sup>2</sup> W. C. Hill, "Conflict" *Baker Encyclopaedia of Psychology*, David G. Benner (Edit). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baked Book House, 1985), 215.

<sup>3</sup> Web. M. E. Meza-de-Luna and H. Romero-Zepeda, *Areas of Conflict in the Intimate Couple*, 92.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. H. Normal Wright, *How to Counsel a Couple in 6 Sessions or Less*, (Ventura, California: From Gospel Light, 2002), 189-20.

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big trouble if one is insistent in spending while the other is reserved.<sup>5</sup> Conflict occurred when either husband or the wife make any purchase in big amount without the knowledge of the other. When the other is concerned of saving money but the other is care free to spend for anything.<sup>6</sup>

### **ii. Lack of Understanding**

In relationship understanding is very much important, especially between couple. When a spouse neglect and give no seriousness to his/her spouse feelings, then misunderstanding take place between couple. Suspecting and fighting begin in couple if spouse do not have actual evidence to convince it. This can be suspecting that spouse is in a secret affair or is cheating him/her. Cheating is the worst thing and deserves to be fought upon.<sup>7</sup>

### **iii. Decision Making**

Each one of us has a mind of our own and view things differently. Similarly, a husband and wife may view issues through their own angle and then make the final decision. There might be two opinions about raising children, hiring a maid or even going to a party that can lead to conflicts.<sup>8</sup> In most cases it is always proper for a man as head of the family to present to his wife any major decision to be made as subject for discussion. When one of them makes major decisions without the knowledge of the other, it will create a big trouble.<sup>9</sup>

Disagreement occurs when couples will not respect each other's ideas. It is always good to discuss and weigh things over before making any decision. If that decision benefits the members of the family, then go for it. When one distrusts the other decision goes wrong and it creates a defensive attitude. It is always best not to make any major decision when one of them has strong points for disagreement. It should be discussed thoroughly before the final move.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ *Christian Counselling for Contemporary Problems*, (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968), 177-18.

<sup>6</sup> DR. Bruce Litchfield and Nellie Litchfield, *Christian Counseling and Family Therapy*. 4 Edit Vol. 6. (Australia: National Library, 2014), 102.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/dealing-with-husband-wife-conflicts.html>. Accessed on 20/8/15

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>9</sup> <http://voices.yahoo.com/common-causes-disagreement-between-husband-and-1028155.htm>. Accessed on 20/8/15

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*,

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#### **iv. Lack of Discipline in Rearing of Children**

It is very much comprehensible that every spouse has his/her own way to discipline their children. A time comes when husband and wife are not uniform in imposing discipline to their kids. The one is so strict while the other is so relax. Sometimes when the father disciplined the kids, the mother will come to the rescue, she will do her best to defend her kids and both of them (father and mother) will end up to disagree in front of their children. In this situation, the kids will be confused and they lost their respect to both the parents.<sup>11</sup>

#### **v. Lack of Communication**

Communication is any behavior that transmits information between people. Within couple, most communication makes one's need known to the spouse and meets the needs of the spouse.<sup>12</sup> Generally, women are more sensitive than men in the emotion. Lack of communication is the prime reason that causes fights in a relationship.<sup>13</sup> A wife expects her spouse to tell her everything about his day. It is a well-known fact that men are weak in communication. On many occasions, a man is unwilling to communicate or just forgets he has a wife waiting to be heard. This causes fights as the woman feels her husband doesn't want to talk to her and is ignoring her. The man might not feel it is essential to convey every single detail to his wife.<sup>14</sup>

### **3. Ways to Solve Couple's Conflict**

How one can help or solve couple conflict? Conflict is common to all couples. Some have had their share of conflict and some of their disagreements have not been attractive. Since every couple has its tensions, it is not a question of avoiding them but of how they deal with them. Therefore one must choose how they will act when conflict occurs. Here are some ways on how to respond when conflict occurs.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> George A.F. Seber, *Counseling Issues: A Handbook for Counselors and Psychotherapists*, (N.P: N. Pub, 2013), 491.

<sup>12</sup> Everett L. Worthington, Jr. *Marriage Counselling: A Christian Approach to Counselling Couples*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), 240.

<sup>13</sup> Gary J. Olives and Sherod Miller, Couple Commutation in *Christian Marital Counselling: 8 Approaches to Helping Couples*, Everett L. Worthington Jr. (Edit). (Secunderabad: OM Books, 1996), 88.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/dealing-with-husband-wife-conflicts.html>. Accessed on 20/8/15

<sup>15</sup> WWW. Family life. Com/articles 6 step for resolving conflict. Accessed on 20/8/15

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### **a. Defeating Selfishness**

Between couple selfish is another biggest source of the conflict, sinful nature. Two people beginning their marriage together and trying to go their own selfish, separate ways can never hope to experience the oneness of marriage as God intended. Marriage offers a tremendous opportunity to do something about selfishness. The answer for ending selfishness is found in Jesus and His teachings. He showed us that instead of wanting to be first, we must be willing to be last; wanting to be served, we must serve and instead of trying to save our lives, we must lose them. In short, if one wants to defeat selfishness, one must give up, give in, and give all. To experience oneness, the couple must give up their will for the will of another. But to do this, one must first give up their will to Christ, and then they will find it possible to give up their will for that of their spouse.<sup>16</sup>

### **b. Loving of Spouse**

Wordsworth said, “He who has a good friend needs no mirror.” Blessed is the marriage where both spouses feel the other is a good friend who will listen, understand, and work through any problem or conflict. To do this will takes loving argument. Confronting the spouse with grace and thoughtfulness requires wisdom, patience, and humility.<sup>17</sup> In the epistle of Ephesians Apostle Paul said, “the two shall become one flesh” (6:32) therefore both the spouse shall submit to his/her spouse, and should love his/her spouse as his/her own flesh, just Christ does the Church and Church had submitted to Christ (6:29).<sup>18</sup>

### **c. Forgiveness**

No matter how hard two people try to love and please each other, they will fail. With failure comes hurt. And the only ultimate relief for hurt is the smoothing calm of forgiveness. The key to maintaining an open, intimate, and happy marriage is to ask for and grant forgiveness quickly. The ability to do that is tied to each individual’s relationship with God. Forgiving means giving up anger and the desire to punish by an act of their will, they let the other person off the hook. And as a Christian they do not do this under compulsion, scratching and screaming in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey C. Bingham, *Practical Christian Counselling*, (Adelaide, South Australia: New Creation Publications Inc., 1981), 64-7.

<sup>18</sup> ESV Bible

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protest. Rather, they do it with a gentle spirit and love, as Paul urged, ‘Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Eph 4:32)’.<sup>19</sup>

#### **d. Daily Prayer**

Daily prayer is very important to avoid conflict within couple. Prayer plays an important role in our lives. It is like a fuel which gives vehicle to run; prayer gives us energy for smooth living (couple) and also equipping to walk in the right direction. Through prayer couple can approach God and express their felling, problems. Even when spouse is apart from one another for period of time, they should be in constant communication with each other, praying for each other daily. Because, God want our fellowship with Him and for that reason He had been created us by His own image.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4. Student’s Response**

As long as men are in relationship conflict will occurs. It is a nature in ever couples. However those kinds of crises can be understood as a crucial time and turning point from bad habit between couples.<sup>21</sup> Sometime conflict can happen sudden without any signs. In the meanwhile conflict is like a motivator between spouses, when a couple handles conflict in positive perspectives. Some couples understood or come to know his/her spouse better after they gone through conflict.

A situation of conflict can help couple to learn more about each other. Each spouse learns about each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and that’s how each spouse can change individual in order to create harmony instead of conflict. But, sometimes it can be create huge issues between couple, if the argument starts increasing and referring back to other times when you’ve been unhappy, angered or annoyed.

Therefore to build up a good relationship both the spouses must know to admit his/her mistakes, and also make available in the needs of her/his spouse. Thus, spouse spends time with one another, learn to give space, and trust each other. Couples with a peaceful relationship have learned to accept their differences through acceptances, understanding and eventually

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<sup>19</sup> WWW. Family life. Com/articles 6 step for resolving conflict. Accessed on 20/8/15

<sup>20</sup> David Hocking, *Marriage and Family*, (Atlanta, Georgia: Solid Rock Radio, 1992), 14.

<sup>21</sup> Howard W. Stone, *Crisis Counselling*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edit. (U. S. A: Fortress Press, 2009), 3.

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complement. Because whenever couples listen to each other they discover their spouses, and begin to take them seriously and even start to listen.

When a couple gone through crises, counselor must know or understand the issues first. Also counselor must know the uses of tools in the time of this situation. In a meantime being a counselor, he/she must know to listen (good listener) to the counselees before giving counselling to the counselees. Because after listening to the counselees we will come to know the problems between couple. During these kinds of periods (crises), spouses are going a time of frustration, bitterness, stress, bewilder, becoming emotionally weak, and needing someone helps for better solution. Therefore, the counselor's objectives should be providing hope for the possibility of positive growth, because it's a very crucial moment to make decisions, when a spouse is in confusion.

### **Conclusions**

From the above discussion, we come to the conclusion that conflicts arises from differences, both large and small. It occurs whenever people disagree over their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires. Sometimes these differences appear unimportant, but when a conflict starts strong feelings, a deep personal need is often at the center of the problem. These needs can be a need to feel safe and secure, a need to feel respected and valued, or a need for greater closeness and intimacy. Everyone or spouse needs to feel understood, nurtured, and supported. We also have learnt that, to resolve these problems one can help the couples in giving counselling and caring the need to solve those problems.

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